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HOSTEL STUDY

A report submitted to the Yukon Territorial Govern-Whitehorse, 1970. ment.

by

M.J.G. FULTON

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submitted in the case of each family serve merely as resumes giving reasons for our recommendations in the case of each child. (See also Table I.)

In addition, discussions were held with chiefs in each village with regard to the general desirability or otherwise of sending children to the hostels as at present. Their views as to possible alternatives were also solicited. In view of the rather unusual problems of the children from Old Crow, discussions were held there, too, with families whose children had been inresidence this year and who would be sending them to Whitehorse next year.

We are grateful for the cooperation and hospitality of all those who helped us in this study. We would especially like to thank Miss Margaret Njootli and Mrs. Irma Stretch for their patience and invaluable typing assistance.

M.J.G. Fulton Hilary White Whitehorse, 1970.

#### INTRODUCTION

Following upon the individual assessments of families of children in residence several things become evident, of which two are particularly clear. The first of these is that, as the only residential service in the Yukon currently providing care for children who are unable to stay at home during the school year, Yukon and Coudert Halls are extremely well-run. They compare more than favourably with similar institutions in other parts of Canada. Keith Johnston, the administrator, has created as much of a home-like atmosphere as possible, given unwieldy structures and staff with limited training. He also operates with a high degree of sympathy and understanding for the cultural differences between not only white and Indian people, but also between the different Indian peoples. Those in Indian Affairs Branch whose concern is the placement of the children in the hostels also show considerable perception and understanding of the needs of the Indian families involved. The other consideration which also became clear is that, since several schools have now been built in a number of outlying settlements, the needs of those children still requiring some sort of residential service could, in many instances, be better provided by alternative institutions. PREVIOUS STUDY

In his study of the hostels, Mr. Kagawa pointed out that the function of the hostels has changed, and that they have come to serve what is more of a welfare function than an educational function, insofar as the greater percentage of placements had been made as a result of problems in the home rather

than as a result of the parents being migratory or living where no school was available. He was no doubt correct in identifying future trends, but our initial observation was that, although there are a large number of children categorized as having problems in the home, the categories are often oversimplified and misleading. Many classified as having problems in the home are also migratory, and it is often the transitory life-style as much as anything which makes it difficult for these people to provide the sort of homes required by children who have to attend school regularly. Of the 140 children with whom we were specifically concerned, 65 could not be currently assessed as being in residence strictly because of problems in the home. Of the 65, 32 have now been reclassified as having no problem or as having no school available; while the other 33 have now been reclassified as having a combination of problems caused by their parents' migratory way of life as well as by family problems.

#### GENERAL CONTENT

The Yukon Indian people tend to be more migratory than their southern counterparts and, in the case of several families, it became evident that the hostels have come to occupy a reculiar place in their social life. Because of the possibility of sending children to the hostels for the winter months, some families have been able to maintain a very free and mobile way of life, moving from place to place for no pressing reason throughout the winter months. If the hostels were removed, this transitory way of life would have to end - inevitably

bringing hardship to many adults who have no training for any other self-reliant way of life. It should be recognized, therefore, that the very removal of the hostel services could reduce the number of children requiring care, although it might increase home problems.

As far as the family situations themselves were concerned, it was observed firstly, that the most stable and happy children came from families who wanted them and cared for them to the best of their ability; and secondly, that the children who were unhappy in the hostels were often much happier at home and became much easier to talk to there (despite problems in the family or poor living conditions). These observations would tend to confirm the policy statement of the Departments of Education and Welfare that, wherever possible, the children should be at home. It was also noted that, in some instances, having the children at home seemed to have given a renewed sense of responsibility to the parents, and that drinking decreased while the children were at home for the summer.

It has been recommended in a number of cases that the children stay at home with their families this year and attend school locally. (See Table II.) However, it is doubtful whether this will drastically change the overall picture since, in terms of hostel attendance, there is a supplementary list of students wishing to be admitted. In the course of our visits to the various villages we, too, heard of several families who were hoping to send their children to the hostel this year

because of family problems.

For those children who must be in residence because of family problems (and also because there is no school available, or because their parents are migratory), one alternative to the hostels would be to place the children in boarding homes, or "school families" for the school term. At first glance, this would seem to be a workable solution. However, some difficulties appear to have arisen in other places where this scheme has been tried - for example, some of the parents in the boarding homes took advantage of the children by using them as domestics. Although careful selection of "parents" could eliminate such difficulties, the Yukon has a shortage of homes prepared to care for children other than their own and would not be able to afford to be too particular.

A better alternative would be group homes. In terms of child care service, there are several advantages of group homes over hostels. Firstly, the number of children living together in a group home is limited to the size of a "family". Ideally then, the children all have more opportunity to relate to parent figures and to receive more individual attention than is possible in the larger administrative units of a hostel. Also, whereas in hostels it is necessary for administrative reasons to divide children into units according to age and sex, in a group home the children can be of both sexes and a variety of ages. The aim of a group home is, after all, to permit as normal a home life as possible for the children living there. In view

have had unhappy home experiences, this aspect of their care.

is at least as important as their formal education, since it is here as well as at home that the children will learn concepts of family life, which will in turn affect their own future families. Secondly, if some of the group homes were to be set up in outlying settlements - such as those which already have schools to grade 12 - the children would be able to see their families more frequently. In the case of those families who must be away from town occasionally during winter, the children could make use of these group homes for the necessary periods while being able to live at home whenever their parents are in town.

The numbers of children for whom residence in group homes or hostel have been recommended are shown in Table III. In making these recommendations we have differentiated between the needs of individual children, recommending group homes especially more for those with urgent need of/individual care and attention than it is possible for a hostel situation to provide. However, it should be noted that even those children recommended to hostel residence have strong needs for affection and attention could also benefit from living in a small group home arrangement. The differentiation has been made simply to indicate priorities of need among the children.

As far as the Indian people are concerned, they would appear already to be strongly in favour of a change in the residential.

horse to group homes in whitehorse and outlying communities.
This became quite evident from our discussions with the parents, and chiefs, and has already been recommended by the Yukon Native Brotherhood Meeting of Chiefs on May 29, 1970. The issue has apparently been discussed in each of the villages and we found the concept of a group home to be quite well understood by those parents and chiefs with whom we spoke. It is felt that, ideally, such group homes should be staffed by Indian people.

The facilities for a group home pilot project already exist, in part, in Ross River. In 1969, the suggestion was made in a brief to the Yukon Social Service Society by a group of interested citizens of Ross River that Mr. A. Kulan's house, (which had been donated to the Roman Catholic Church), should be rented at a nominal rate and used as a group home for pupils whose parents had to work in the bush periodically during the school year. Despite offers by private parties to staff and furnish the project, no use was made of it during the 1969/70 school year for a variety of reasons. Since the offers are unlikely to be repeated on so generous terms, there would be a number of costs necessary before the house could be put to use - for example, heating system, maintenance, furnishing, staff salaries. However, since the house itself is in extremely good condition and could still probably be rented at a nominal sum, the idea of using it as a group home should be reconsidered. It should also be noted that the people living in this district

would appear to be more migratory in their way of life than the Indian peoples in other areas of the Yukon, and so their need for such a facility could be considered greater here than elsewhere.

Although it is not within the scope of this report to recommend who should staff these group homes, some relevant observations might be made. Although certain families have been classified as migratory or as having no school available, (and it is for this reason that the children are in residence), some of these are also families with social problems in the home. In a number of instances, the children of these families have been affected by physical or emotional violence and are in need of the specialized care they could receive from trained child care workers. Indeed, it could be said that the number of children who are in residence for purely welfare reasons, together with other children from unhappy homes do constitute the greater majority of the children in the hostels at present.

with regard to whether some of the unhappy families could be helped by casework services, it should be noted that a few of these families are already receiving some such services from the Department of Social Welfare. However, since the bases of their problems would appear to be much more complex and social than mere personal inadequacy, it is doubtful whether increasing case work services alone would be very helpful. These families have, to a large extent, been affected by social breakdown. Over a period, they might be helped by a community worker who could help them to make a more positive adjustment

to a world in flux.

A few children have been classified as coming from problem homes simply because the parents do not make sure that their children attend school regularly. To an extent, this problem could be ameliorated if the schools could develop courses which would attract - who are often from families who, themselves, have had little experience of white schools and who are thus unable to help the child to relate what he is learning at school to everyday life. In addition, the attendance problems might be affected by more home visits on the part of the truant officers.

A special note should be made in the instance of the children from Cld Crow. These children have not been able to fit in with the hostel life as easily as children from other settlements. Supervisors and other children complain that the Old Crow children will not mix with everyone else, and that they tend to be "wilfull" in only obeying the rules when they want to. On the other hand, the Old Crow children complain of being "ganged-up-on" by the other children, including not only name-calling but physical violence, and of being treated like children by the supervisors. Of 5 children from Old Crow enrolled at the beginning of last year in grade 1 3 returned to Old Crow long before the end of term. The other students who stayed to complete the year claimed to be quite unhappy at the hostel, although they enjoyed school and had

no trouble making friends with white children. These enmities among the Indian people appear to be quite old and are certainly beyond the control of the hostel administration to change overnight. The children's parents in Old Crow are most concerned a about this unhappy situation. They made the decision some years ago to send the children to Whitehorse instead of Inuvik (in conjunction with other administrative changes). However, they have found it not to be a satisfactory arrangement as far as the children's residence is concerned. Many parents and children now wish that the children could go to Inuvik instead, where they have many kinfolk and friends. Transport and communication services are also much more frequent between Inuvik and Old Crow than they are between Whitehorse and Old Crow and, if the children were in Inuvik, they would be able to receive mail, radio messages and visits more frequently. If the children must continue to attend school in Whitehorse after grade 9, then perhaps a group home especially for Old Crow children might make their adjustment to living in a strange city easier.

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#### RECOMMENDATIONS:

In accordance with our findings outlined above, we feel that the following recommendations would be in order:

- 1. Everything possible ought to be done to improve family situations so that children currently in the hostels for reason of family problems be allowed to stay at home including development of casework and community development services.
- 2. Group homes ought to be established in Whitehorse, Watson Lake, Ross River, Mayo or Carmacks, and Dawson City so that the children from these places requiring residential care and/or special attention can live closer to their families.
- 3. A pilot project ought to be set up, using the house already existant in Ross River.
- 4. If boarding homes are to be established, the prospective parents ought to be screened as carefully as foster parents would be.
- 5. In the case of families who are unable to keep children for financial reasons, money which would be given to boarding parents ought to be given to the real family.
- 6. Those families financially able to provide for their children in the hostels or group homes ought to be encouraged to do so.
- 7. Consideration ought to be given to the particular residential problems of the children from Old Crow.

#### Additional figures

Of the 15 children assessed as requiring special care, their family problems were as follows:

- 6..... violence associated with alcoholism neglect due to alcoholism, lack of supervision
- 4..... neglect due to alcoholism; lack of supervision
- 2..... both parents or mother missing
- 1..... violence due to alcoholism
- 1..... housing inadequate neglect due to alcoholism, lack of supervision poor school attendance
- 1..... trouble with the law both parents or mother missing

12 children from five families were in residence purely because of inadequate housing.

6 children from three families were in residence for reasons which included inadequate housing, but which were also associated with other social problems which would also have deemed it necessary for the children to be away from home.

There were 4 children in residence mainly because of poor attendance at their local school.

There were 3 children in residence because they had been in trouble with the law.

Another 2 children were in residence because of both the above problems combined.

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#### CODE

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1. Child to stay at home
- 2. Foster home or boarding family
- 3. Group home
- 4. Residence in hostel

#### CATEGORIES

- A. PREVIOUS as established by Indian Affairs and Northern Development
  - 1. The appropriate school or program is not available in the area that the family resides.
  - 2. Parents are migratory.
  - 3. Problems in the home.
- B. CURRENT as established by Hostel Study
  - 1. No school available.
  - 2. Parents still follow migratory way of life.
  - 3. Problems in the home, or, orphan.

#### SPECIFIC HOME PROBLEMS

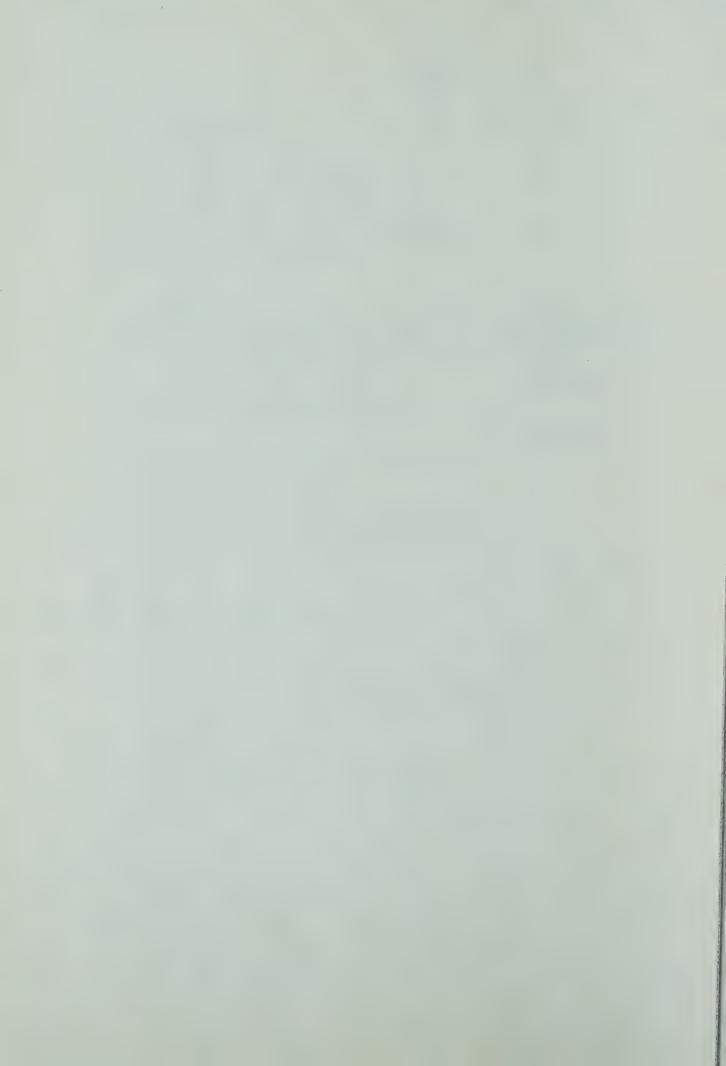
- 1. Inadequate housing
- 2. Violence associated with alcoholism
- 3. Neglect due to alcoholism, lack of supervision
- 4: Poor school attendance
- 5. Trouble with the law
- 6. Both parents or mother missing

## APPENDIX A.

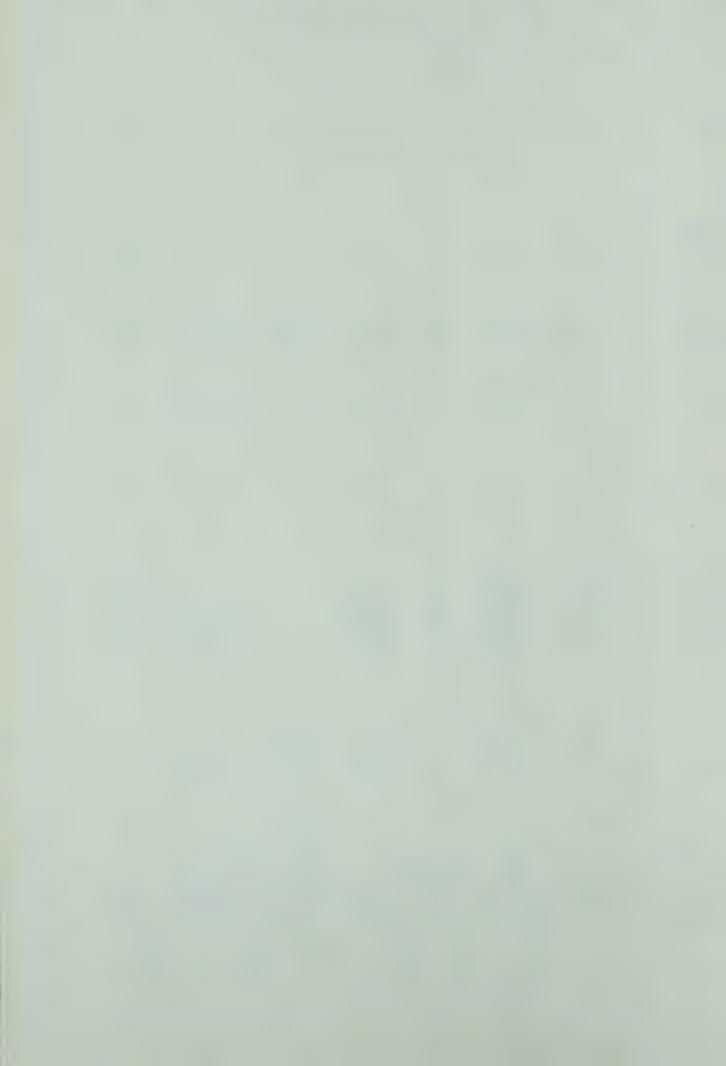
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Table III

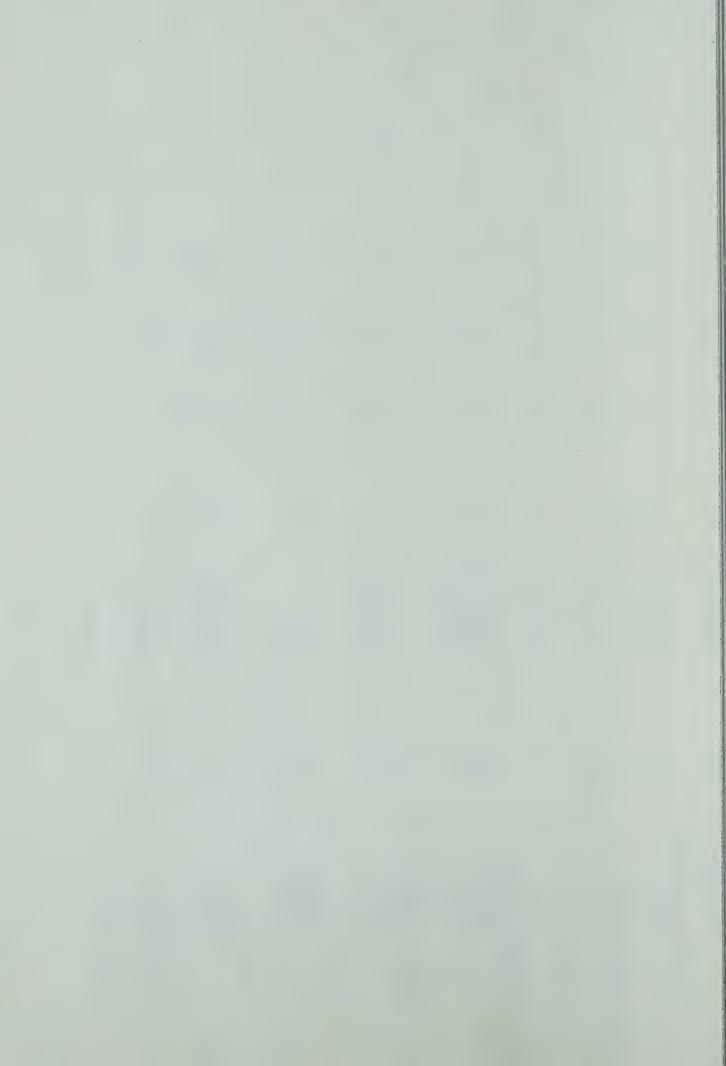


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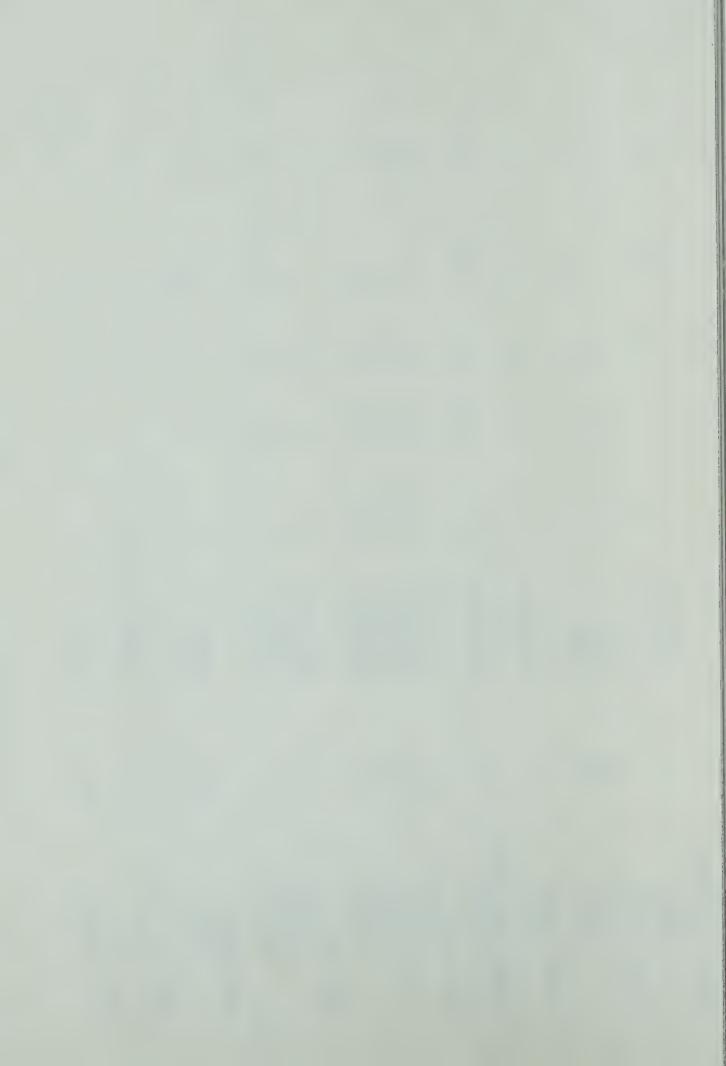


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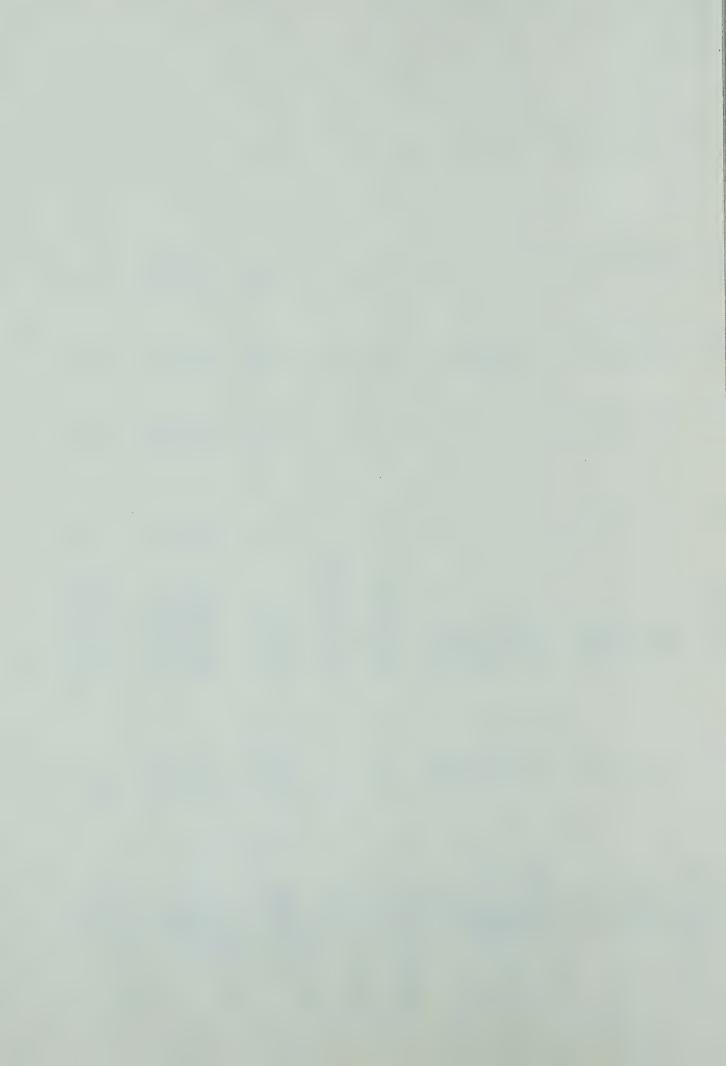
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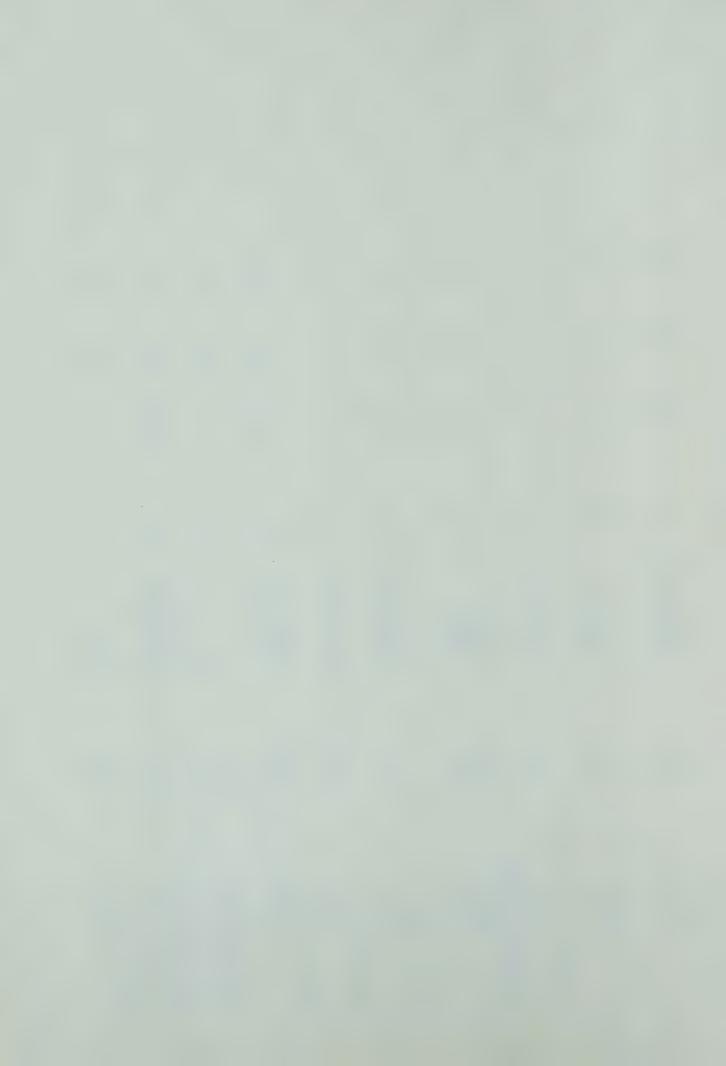
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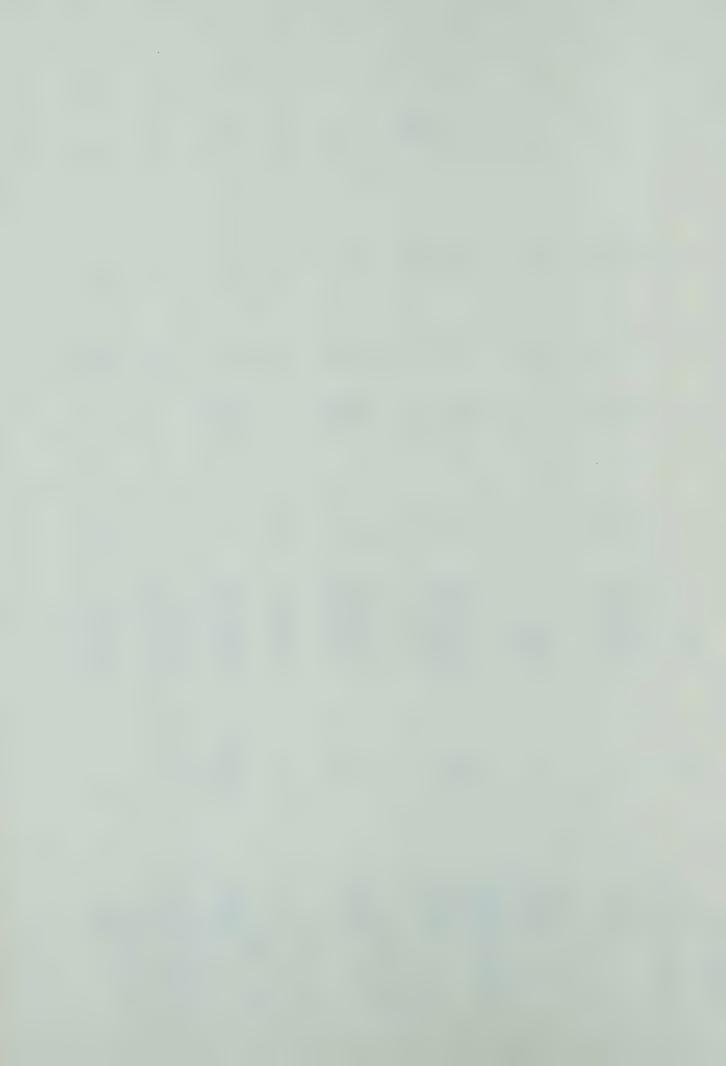
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TABLE II

Distribution of Students In Local Communities as per Recommendations.

COMMUNITY	FOSTER HOME	GROUP HOME	RESIDENCE	HOME
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Burwash Landing	•	3	<b>a</b> tur .	910
Carmacks		4_	2	24
Dawson	-	7	1	-
Haines Junction	-		<b>e</b> nia	1
Liard	-	15		Box
Mayo	1	ONE	RTHAN	3
Ross River	-	6	***	3
Watson Lake		6	-	3
Whitehorse	6	24	15	10
No Address	5	4	-	espo
TOTALS	15	74	23	28

### TABLE III

Total Number of Students In Each Geographical Area Requiring Group Home And Residential Services.

		GROUP HOME A	ND RES	IDENCE	COMBINED		
Whitehorse	38	Ross River	6		Atlin		11
No Address	4	Carmacks	6		Liard	15	
Burwash	3	Dawson		8	Watson I	ake 6	
TOTALS	45		12,	8		21 ,	11

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	Date	Due						
YB 81								
- 31								
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FULTON, M.J.G. and WHITE, HILARY								
- Hostel	study							
TITLE								
DATE	BOR	ROWER'S NAME	DATE					
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FULTON, M.J.G. and WHITE, Hilary

Hostel study.

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